

Upper Cumberland Region CQI Program Regional Structure

Regional Description

The Upper Cumberland region of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services consists of fourteen counties including Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren and White. The Upper Cumberland region is mainly rural with the largest county being Putnam. The largest city is Cookeville, which is among the top 40 micropolitan areas in the nation and is the largest micropolitan area in Tennessee. We are located almost halfway between Knoxville and Nashville with Interstate 40 dissecting the region laterally. The Upper Cumberland area is a highland region of rolling hills covered in forest and fields, small farms tucked into isolated coves, and historic communities planted along the meandering rivers. The region has many beautiful state parks such as Fall Creek Falls and Burgess Falls, top-rated golf courses, lakes, rivers, hiking trails, championship fishing, hunting, and an amazing variety of sports. The educational center for the region includes Tennessee Technological University, which has an international reputation, and there are several other community colleges and technology centers within the region as well.

The Upper Cumberland region of the Department of Children's Services has over 200 dedicated employees whom provide services for children and families within the communities of our fourteen counties. Our regional structure is comprised of four clusters who offer direct services via Child Protective Services (CPS), Social Services (SS), and Juvenile Justice (JJ) program areas and of a regional cluster that provides supplemental support via Extended Foster Care services, a Kinship Coordinator, a Placement Services Division, Resource Parent Support unit, a Child and Family Team Meeting Facilitator Unit, and a Health Advocate Representative. We are also fortunate to house Central Office employees within the Legal Division, Fiscal Unit and Well-Being Unit that is inclusive of a psychologist, an Educational Specialist, and Eligibility Counselors. Together we strive to meet the mission of our agency, which is fostering partnerships to protect children, develop youth, strengthen families, and build safe communities.

Leadership CQI Workgroup(s)

Core Leadership

The Upper Cumberland Core Leadership team is represented by our Regional Administrator (RA), Deputy Regional Administrator, Program Coordinator, Team Coordinators, Human Resource Analyst, Fiscal Director, Regional General Counsel, regional CPS Coordinator, regional JJ Coordinator, Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment Consultant, Field Customer Care Representative, regional Health Advocate Representative, CQI Coordinator, Training Coordinator and Regional Trainer. On a quarterly basis, all supervisors within the region participate in this meeting as well. This monthly assembly serves as the venue for us to discuss systemic accomplishments and challenges that pertain not only to core program areas, but also to specialty areas such as our legal division, fiscal unit, human resources and training divisions, and statewide automated child welfare information system (TFACTS). Additionally, the training and coaching committee developed to support the In Home Tennessee initiative in our region has recently been integrated into this meeting in order to promote a culture where professional development is nurtured and coaching becomes our choice style of leadership. With this gathering occurring on the 2nd Monday of each month, it allows for an effective flow of

communication from our Regional Administrator who shares critical information discussed during the statewide RA meeting which is convened during the previous week and enables our Team Coordinators to have guided discussions at their own monthly management meetings with those whom they supervise.

Quality Practice Team Meeting

The Upper Cumberland Quality Practice Team (QPT) meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month and is facilitated by the Regional Administrator or Deputy Regional Administrator. With this team being an established and consistent forum of service providers, community partners, frontline staff, and core leadership team members that was once known as our Cross Functional Team, it offers the opportunity to discuss our region's successes and barriers as identified in specific data such as that contained within our State of the Child reports and Quality Service Reviews. It was natural for us to also utilize this existing meeting and its participants for dual purposes by having this serve as our Regional Implementation Team to support the In Home Tennessee initiative as well. This Quality Practice Team is the center field for CQI that branches into four specific Quality Practice Circles (QPC): Kinship Placements/Recruitment of Resource Parents/Permanency, Safety, Youth, and Juvenile Justice. Each QPC meets monthly to discuss unique concerns for their program and potential solutions are developed at this level; however, those concerns are passed up to QPT and/or Core Leadership when necessary. Representatives from each QPC provide monthly updates at the QPT meeting and service providers also share information about new services or trainings that would be beneficial to the region.

CQI Workgroups

Kinship/Recruitment/Permanency (KRP) Circle

This workgroup generally meets on a Thursday or Friday at 9:30 a.m. at the Regional Office in Cookeville with the polycom available for those that are unable to attend in person. This circle includes the kinship coordinator, staff from the Placement Unit, Permanency Specialists from the clusters as well as various private providers. This team works on ways to recruit resource homes, training for the resource parents, ways to increase numbers of kinship placements, providing support to the current homes to help make them the best that they can be and any other areas that are needed. Following UC's Quality Service Review, it was determined that work needed to be done around adoption & permanency. This circle is just beginning to look at those areas & develop ideas to make them happen in a timelier manner.

Youth Circle

This workgroup includes a Team Coordinator who facilitates the meeting, our Independent Living Specialist, an Extended Foster Care worker, our regional DCS psychologist, a Health Advocate Representative, service providers, and a community partner. This team reviews all cases of youth who are 17 ½ years old and assess whether their Independent Living and/or transitional living plans are adequate to prepare them for pending adulthood and potential exit from state care or from their transition into extended foster care. This team also collaborates with the region to implement an annual Celebration of Excellence ceremony for all youth who have graduated, earned a General Education diploma, or achieved academic excellence in the past academic year.

Safety Circle

This workgroup includes the Regional Administrator or her designee, the Regional CPS Specialist as well as CPS TL's & case managers from each cluster as available. The team looks at new policies affecting

their practice and generally does peer file reviews as well. Regional General Counsel usually attends the meeting and Severe Abuse cases are discussed. Overdue cases are looked at & suggestions for getting them closed are offered. This team continually looks at quality & consistency throughout the region. Following Quality Service Review, the Safety Circle realized that communication was a big factor in a lot of the indicators. This circle is starting to work on better communication from the beginning of the case between the CPS workers & the foster care workers & others which should also help with the engagement indicator.

Juvenile Justice Circle

This team is facilitated by a former JJ TL who is now a Cluster TC. Generally, each cluster has representation at each meeting (either TL or FSW or both), the Regional JJ Coordinator usually attends as well as private providers who share information about services available. This circle looks at policies affecting their program area, overdue EPSDT & Medical appointments for their youth, missed face to face visits and other items that affect them. Following Upper Cumberland's QSR, the circle looked at each JJ case that was reviewed & discussed strengths & opportunities in each. They have developed plans to help improve practice based on those observations as well as celebrate the successes seen.

Each Quality Practice Circle has or will be reviewing applicable COA standards on a regular basis.

In Home Tennessee Committees

The Upper Cumberland region was selected as a pilot region for the ACCWIC/ In Home Tennessee Initiative. After an initial needs assessment five subgroups were developed within the region.

Visitation Committee

This group met and was successful in coordinating along with providers the use of several facilities as visitation centers where families could meet and be in a more natural setting (as opposed to trying to visit at McDonald's). The Visitation group met its goals & is no longer meeting.

Communications Committee

This group is attended by one person in the region. It is a quasi-state group that meets by poly-com most of the time.

Domestic Violence Committee

This group is not meeting as regularly. They initially had a lot of success in partnering with local domestic violence shelters to provide training to some of our CPS folks at their CPS Specialty Day in 2012 but the group has not met regularly in several months.

Alcohol and Drug Committee

This group has been very successful. The committee consists of DCS field staff and supervisors, all local A & D providers as well as some county's Community Anti- Drug Coalition members. They initially surveyed front-line workers to see what their needs were. The A&D Group has begun addressing some service gaps both by front-line workers as well as some noted by committee members. They have also developed a plan for training DCS staff on 4 topics: Drugs 101, Disease or Choice, Co-occurring illness and Continuum of Care Part 1. They also plan to do a Continuum of Care Part 2 after everyone has gone through all 4 parts of the training where the providers will sit on a panel and discuss their agency as well as answer any questions. After the training is complete, the committee plans to engage local agencies and begin to address local challenges in this area.

Training and Coaching Workgroup

As discussed in the Introduction to In Home Tennessee workshop and in the four subsequent practice workshops delivered to our staff, our Department has committed to creating a culture where coaching is used to enhance our case practices, to develop leadership skills amongst our staff and to strengthen supervision that supports critical decision making. The Upper Cumberland Training and Coaching workgroup created a coaching plan to guide this work in the region. The plan is for coaching to evolve in such a way that it follows natural patterns of supervision in that the Regional Administrator will coach Team Coordinators, Team Coordinators will coach Team Leaders, and Team Leaders will coach their direct staff. Coaching will be used during case conferences and reviews, during monthly performance briefings, following training, and during peer to peer consults. It is anticipated that our staff will soon begin to utilize coaching as a means to guide families through crisis and conflict resolution so that formal interventions are not always necessary. Supervisors envision that coaching will improve practice by encouraging casework to be solution-focused, outcomes driven and proactive with an emphasis on enhancing performance instead of addressing performance deficits. This workgroup is now integrated into our monthly Core Leadership meeting.

Regional CQI Schedule

CQI Workgroup	Regular Meeting Time	Facilitator	Scribe
Kinship/Recruitment/Permanency (KRP)	Varies	Michael T. Wilson	Loreen Broderick
Youth	2 nd Wednesday at 1 p.m.	Felicia Harris/Reda Spurlock	Loreen Broderick
Safety	1 st Monday at 9 a.m.	Tonya Scott/Jennifer Friel	Tonya Scott/Jennifer Friel
JJ	2 nd Tuesday at 9 a.m.	Gayla Jestice	Gayla Jestice
A&D (In Home TN Group)	2 nd Wednesday	Sherri Phillips/Jessica Tucker	Loreen Broderick
Domestic Violence (In Home TN Group)	Varies	Anna Denino	